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University Libraries Program Review – Internal Reviewer’s Report

Introduction

This document serves as the Internal Reviewer’s Report conducted during March and April 2019 in relation to University Libraries. In preparing this report, several documents were examined including, but not limited to, criteria for internal reviewer reports, the prior 2007 Internal Reviewer’s Report prepared by Dr. Mary Balkun, the University Libraries Program Review 2018, the SHU University Libraries website, and the ALA Standards for Libraries in Higher Education. To further understand the program review document and materials submitted to me, I participated in a detailed tour of the library during the fall of 2018, met with the Library Program Review Committee twice (once in the fall of 2018 and again in March 2019), and met with faculty, staff, and administration on March 21st from 10:00 am to 3:30 pm to obtain additional perspectives from various stakeholders regarding the operations, practices, and goals of University Libraries. For library personnel unable to meet during my visit on March 21st, I held individual meetings with key members to obtain their perspective on the inner workings of the library as appropriate to the program review process during the first two weeks of April. This report documents my assessment and recommendations for the University Libraries in key areas most appropriate for me to provide insight via the lens of the unit’s mission, core values, and vision 2020 statement.

Library Overview & Mission

According to the University Libraries website (<https://library.shu.edu/library/mission>) and the 2018 self-study, the mission of the library is to, “support excellence in academic and individual work, enable inquiry, foster intellectual and ethical integrity and respect for diverse points of view through user-focused services and robust collections as the intellectual and cultural heart of the University.”

The library’s strategic plan and program review also identifies six core values consisting of: service, access, learning, community, collaboration, and preservation. These core values are woven throughout the report and elaborated upon as appropriate and relatable to other sections of the document and as supported by the self-study and accompanying reviewed materials to assess the library’s performance pertaining to their self-identified goals and accomplishments over the past several years.

Faculty and Staff

Thirteen faculty librarians, nine staff members, and eight administrators support the Walsh Library. There are three IHS library faculty. All library faculty are expected to possess the appropriate credentials as well as meet Faculty Guide criteria for teaching, scholarship, and service. According to the ALA, the library faculty possess the appropriate credentials (such as a M.L.S./M.L.I.S). In many instances, the Walsh library faculty possess more than one graduate degree (13 of 14). Additionally, five library faculty possess a terminal degree; this is an increase in terminally degreed faculty based upon the 2007 Internal Reviewer Report which noted “that only four of the library faculty hold a degree above the MA or MLS” (p. 4).

Beyond credentials, the library faculty have continued to underscore the importance of teaching by increasing the number of classes taught per year. For instance, the Internal Reviewer Report (2007, p. 3) reported the library faculty teaching (during 2005-06) 252 classes. The 2018 self-study reports, during 2017-18, the faculty librarians “taught 362 classes to nearly 7,500 students compared with 5,400 in 2012” (p. 4). Library instruction focuses on an introduction to the library (University Life), English 1201, English 1202, and other undergraduate and graduate courses that require library instruction. The library faculty also seek ways to improve instruction and to support student learning. One recent initiative is

the Research Guides (LibGuides) that provide concentrated library instruction for a specific course and its content. The increase in class instruction, number of students engaged in those classes, and new instructional initiatives that advance student information and digital literacy of course content further illustrates the library faculty's commitment to the core values of *learning* and *access* to information that helps the academic community recognize that the 'library is indispensable' (as noted in the vision for 2020).

As for scholarship the self-study notes, "the library faculty have authored or co-authored a total of 39 articles, six books, five book chapters, and eight conference papers, and made 85 presentations" (p. 7). The faculty have also secured a number of grants (n=12), obtained a variety of awards, and secured visiting scholar appointments (n=3). These accomplishments illustrate the library faculty's core values of *learning* and *collaboration* as they contribute to one another's projects, celebrations of individual accomplishments, recognition in the field, and engagement in meaningful scholarship that contributes to the broader community of scholars interested in library sciences, information literacy, and subfields of the discipline.

Another area of import to the library faculty is service. As noted in the 2007 Internal Reviewer Report as well as the 2018 self-study, the library faculty serve on a variety of university committees, subcommittees, and Faculty Senate. Library faculty work is highly impacted by service work given the limited number of them in relation to faculty in the broader university. This commitment to service has assisted them in carrying forward the University Libraries mission, message of support, and helped the broader campus become better acquainted with library services. While it has benefitted the library, in general, to serve Seton Hall in this capacity, this degree of campus engagement can also detract from or add significant workload to other areas of library faculty responsibility such as scholarship and teaching. Regardless, the library faculty illustrate the core values of *service*, *community*, and *collaboration*.

While library faculty play a fundamental role in library success, a significant number of library initiatives are brought to fruition through the efforts and labor of library administrators, staff, interns, and volunteers. Administrators have worked to position University Libraries for success via the development of infrastructures, processes, and procedures to guide internal operations, external engagements, and workflow practices to meet the ever-changing nature and role of libraries in higher education environments. A good example of administrative guidance and infrastructure involves the creation and implementation of the IHS library initiative and how this new campus initiative would interface with the Walsh library. Understanding the underpinnings of information and resource sharing and the building of a second library site extending from Walsh in collaboration with our medical school partners, Hackensack-Meridian, was no easy feat. It required a detailed analysis with careful attention to operational practices including, but not limited to, negotiating cost, space, vendor agreements, and the workflow involved in every service and program offered between the two library campuses. The library administration illustrated the core values of *service*, *access*, *community*, and *collaboration* by meeting an immediate need, involving the library faculty in decision making, and adopting the necessary protocols via technology and other relevant tools to successfully implement the IHS library.

As noted earlier, the library staff, interns, work-study students, and volunteers play a significant role in supporting library operations and initiatives. Without these important contributors, the library would experience significant challenges supporting a host of services ranging from the circulation desk and gallery to the interlibrary loan program and technical support. This joint effort of staff, student workers, and volunteers further exemplifies a culture of *community*, *collaboration*, and *service* articulated in the core values.

Information Resources

Perhaps one of the greatest areas illustrating the library's core value of *access* is found in its collection of information resources. Walsh is the home to thousands of books, monographs, e-books, print and online journals, and various audio and visual materials and tools. The growth of internet services and digital information has led to the migration of print documents to digital ones. This shift has increased faculty and students' access to information and improved our ability to obtain information for various research purposes. While digital services have improved our access to information, they have added to the skillset required of administrators and library faculty in navigating their work-world. For example, librarians must develop negotiation skills to engage vendors in the cost of digital materials. Additionally, library faculty must stay abreast of technology and tools that assist them in locating information to best serve faculty and students in meeting different academic goals. The library administration and faculty's commitment to digital services and the need for ongoing professional development further illustrates their core values of *learning* and *collaboration*. Other collections, such as the Valente Italian Library and the Asian Studies Collection and Chinese Corner offer our internal and external communities' access to culture, diverse thinking, varied viewpoints, and an opportunity to interact with people and artifacts different than our/themselves. Beyond *access*, the core values of *service*, *learning*, and *preservation* are embodied.

Budget/Funding and Inadequacies

The library budget is complicated and allocated to the different areas to which it provides support. This is not surprising given the complex operational and service offerings provided by Walsh. Funding comes from various sources ranging from endowments and restricted funds (see Program Review 2018, p. 13) to the Office of the Provost, which provides the greatest source of funding. This funding is then distributed across several initiatives involving personnel and non-personnel. A key take-away from my internal review of the library documents and faculty, staff, and administrator interviews, along with previous internal reviews is the lack of increased funding allocated to the University Library since 2007. With the exception of a \$100,000.00 increase for acquisitions, the funding has been quite limited. This is especially difficult to comprehend when the cost of information technologies, electronic journals and databases, online platforms that increase interaction and engagement, and the infrastructure and professional development required to implement, maintain, and manage such information access and technological systems is escalating in cost. The lack of library funding has negative consequences for the library in meeting unit goals by limiting its collections, number of faculty lines, and contributing to increased workloads for the administration, faculty, and staff members. To address budgetary shortfalls, the library administration, faculty, and staff, via collaboration, have engaged in creative problem-solving via administrative planning involving timelines and workflows, reimagined the humanities and how they manifest in the 21st century to better utilize NEH funding sources, and performed ongoing program assessment of information sources and vendor contracts among others to invoke responsible resource management strategies that best use the resources available. When examining Table 6 (p. 17, 2018 Program Review), there is a significant difference between the budgets of our peer institutions and SHU University Libraries. Even with these budget differences, the library has been able to advance, manage, and support Collection Services (e.g., Acquisitions & Serials, Technical Services, Electronic Resources, and Information Technology & Digital Services), Public Services (e.g., Access Services, Instruction & Reference), as well as Archives, Special Collections and Walsh Gallery.

Furthermore, with an inadequate budget, University Libraries has been able to initiate a host of new services since the 2007 review. Some new services include Information Technology and Digital Services, Research Guides (LibGuides), Electronic Dissertations & Theses Services, Ask a Librarian & Live Chat

Services, Data Services, and Digital Preservation Services, to name a few. Each of the new services illustrates the core values of *service, access, learning, community, collaboration, and preservation*.

Assessments and Recommendations for Future Improvement and Growth

University Libraries continues to develop goals and initiatives grounded in the mission and core values outlined in the 2012-2020 strategic plan and self-study. This careful planning has assisted and will continue to guide them in fulfilling the vision articulated in that document: “The Libraries are at the heart of Seton Hall’s intellectual ambitions and the first source for scholarship and information where students’ needs are the library’s top priority, faculty find the resources essential for their teaching and research, and students graduate with the realization that the library is indispensable.” University Libraries hopes to achieve this goal by 2020.

To assist in fulfilling the Libraries vision, the following recommendations are provided:

- 1) As noted throughout this internal review document, the library appears to have been operating on a flat budget for the past several years. Budget inadequacies have been documented in the 2007 Internal Reviewer Report, the 2018 Program Review Self-Study, and this report. Given the number of services, information sources, and initiatives offered by the library, budgetary and funding source increases are critical.
- 2) University stakeholders must be educated on, or obtain an understanding of, the cost of initiating digital projects related to information access, infrastructure, management, and preservation in conjunction with the hidden cost associated with ongoing faculty and staff development, cost of e-source materials, and the skillset development that must occur across a structure administratively and faculty-based to offer such services. A common misbelief is that going digital is cheaper; however, in many instances it is far more expensive due to hidden cost. Often these hidden costs are incurred by employees in the form of workload, unmanageable tasks, and constantly changing roles requiring professional development the employee has to learn on his/her own without institutional support (e.g., time) while managing their other duties and responsibilities.
- 3) The number of staff and faculty should be increased to better meet the needs of Seton Hall University and the changing nature and roles of libraries in higher education. This increase is also needed to close the gap between University Libraries and their peer institutions concerning resources.
- 4) The library faculty should identify and collaborate with faculty in other Seton Hall colleges/schools to advance instructional outreach to undergraduate and graduate students beyond English 1201/1202. There are faculty in various programs who research, teach, and present on library-related topics such as information, digital, and media literacy as it relates to their respective fields. This partnership could help reduce library faculty workload while also promoting library core values such as *collaboration* and *learning*. This collaboration could further help us to better prepare students, at all levels, for digital citizenship, functioning in a knowledge economy, and developing the digital, information, and media literacy skillsets required of working professionals, critical thinkers, and consumers of online content today.
- 5) Given the library faculty role and workload components, it may be time to revisit the current 12-month contract governing our colleagues. As noted in the 2018 Program Review, “The twenty days of research time that librarians receive (considered equivalent to a course release) contributed greatly to their scholarly activity and is gratefully acknowledged. However, research

time is not accompanied by any meaningful reduction in workload” (p. 7). It is important to note that the 20 days of research time is not a given. Instead, library faculty must apply and compete for this research time each year. Additionally, one or two of the faculty secure such release time in any semester or year. After reflecting on my library visit, discussions, and document reviews, I am concerned about the expectations we place on library colleagues to support our entire campus community and external stakeholders while also requiring scholarship and service requirements in a context of limited resources (e.g., funding, time). A reimaging of the 12-month contract could further promote the library’s mission, core values, and ultimately assist the library in achieving their 2020 vision while also supporting the library faculty.

In closing, I’d like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to review, learn, converse, and grow from my interactions with the University Libraries administration, faculty, and staff. I also appreciate the seriousness to which they engaged their self-study, the assessment standards they applied via data analysis and critical evaluation of their performance, and the thoughtful planning that went into developing future goals and initiatives. The documents reviewed reveal that University Libraries has consistently improved and made progress each year toward meeting its objectives. Furthermore, through my review, I have ascertained that University Libraries is embodying its mission and core values. The library is uniquely positioned to achieve the 2020 vision with greater institutional support and acknowledgement of the role University Libraries play in supporting the modern academy. Seton Hall University is fortunate to have such colleagues and the many components that comprise University Libraries.

Respectfully submitted,

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